Open letter from Keith Jecks, Chair of the Planning Policy Committee

I want to ensure residents are aware of the work taking place to prepare for the publication of the draft Local Plan. This letter sets out the timetable for the next few weeks.

On 6 June and 7 June we are giving your councillors briefing sessions about the sites, along with infrastructure improvements in their ward, which will form part of the draft Local Plan.

I am determined to make sure all councillors are pre-briefed, so they can help answer any questions you may have when the draft Local Plan document is made public.

I have also asked the planning officers to publish the draft Local Plan document earlier than is statutorily required. This will be available for everyone to read on 21 June and in addition we are preparing fact sheets for each area to make the information for where you live easier to understand.

The process is complicated and the documents necessarily huge. By sharing information as soon as we can, our residents, the Planning Policy Committee and anyone else with an interest, will have as much time as we can give them to read and understand the plan. This next draft Local Plan represents the culmination of three years’ work.

I am a passionate defender of the Green Belt. Our beautiful district is 94% Green Belt, the highest proportion of any district in the entire country and likely to remain in the top three when our Local Plan is adopted. We know our residents feel passionate about this too.

We have held three consultations about the Local Plan. We have listened to what you have said and have shaped the plan accordingly. The total number of new homes this district can accommodate is likely to be around 6,200, which is not anywhere close to the current need of 9,400 homes or indeed the government’s need calculation of 12,900. It is very likely we will be challenged about our much lower figure during the inspection process, by the government and by developers.
In preparing the draft Local Plan, excluding the potential sites for the Garden Community sites, we have had to look at 114 sites put forward by landowners in the Green Belt, which if all were developed would provide 30,759 homes.

Having carefully considered all the evidence, apart from the proposed Garden Community, we will only be proposing 14 of these sites which would allow the development of 893 homes on Green Belt sites and only when they can deliver a clear community benefit.

We can’t continue to rely on development of brownfield sites or within our existing towns to meet the overall housing need targets. We need to find the right balance. The proposed Garden Community will lead to the development of around 4,000 homes built over three decades, with associated infrastructure.

At this stage based on the evidence, the draft Local Plan will recommend the Garden Community is located in South Godstone. Once the Local Plan is adopted, the Council, working very closely with the local community, will draw up a Masterplan.

We have to prepare a Local Plan. Not just by law, but because we need a long term plan (20 years in this case). We have an ageing population and homes which cost so much our young people have no option, but to move out of the area. We need to provide for future generations. We need them to keep this district vibrant, thriving and economically successful.

This is our opportunity to provide more affordable homes for local families and create local well paid jobs which will help our young people get on the property ladder. This is also very much about new roads, healthcare facilities and schools to support existing and future generations. Our strategy for the Local Plan is the best approach we have been able to identify which will deliver infrastructure to a higher standard.

For the majority of our residents the Local Plan will deliver benefits and it will be good news. For those who will be most affected, I am committed to working with you to do everything we can to minimise the impact.

Please get involved and read the documents when they are released. This Local Plan marks a significant step forward in ensuring the viability and sustainability of the district.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Keith Jecks
Chair of the Planning Policy Committee

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Local Plan
Garden Villages Consultation

Council takes tough stand against new government policy in defence of Green Belt

At a Council meeting earlier this month the Leader of the Council, Martin Fisher, set out the areas the Council will not compromise on as it prepares the Local Plan.

In response to government proposals for new housing targets, which could see the number of homes the Tandridge district should deliver increase by 40%, Councillor Fisher said the Council will stand firm in its commitment to deliver a sustainable and realistic number of new homes, supported by infrastructure, while also protecting the Green Belt and open nature of the district.

Councillor Fisher will shortly be meeting the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, to argue the case against any imposed and unjustified increase in housing numbers. Last month, all 11 Leaders from district and borough councils across Surrey made a joint response in defiance of the government’s proposals. The Leaders are insisting constraints on development, like protection of the Green Belt, which accounts for 94% of the Tandridge district, are taken into account when determining the number of homes each authority is expected to plan for.

This will ensure the Local Plan delivers a balanced number of new market and affordable homes, desperately needed for local people, in a sustainable way and also delivers infrastructure and prosperity for the district.
The Council is still analysing the feedback from the Local Plan: Garden Villages consultation and this will form part of the evidence used to draft the Local Plan. No decision has been taken regarding the location for the Garden Village. Three locations, Blindley Heath, Redhill Aerodrome and South Godstone, are still being assessed for their ability to deliver infrastructure gains for the benefit of existing communities, as well as future generations.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Council’s decision to categorise part of the Redhill Aerodrome site and other surrounding land as Safeguarded Land for future development has been discussed by the two councils under their duty to co-operate, but any decisions about location of a wider garden community will be made by the Council based on evidence and in the best interests of residents.

There will be a further consultation on the plan before any final amendments are made and it is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination in 2018.

Councillor Martin Fisher, Leader of the Council, said: “The Council has been working tirelessly to identify the land and infrastructure necessary to deliver the housing we need, so our children and grandchildren can continue to live in the Tandridge district. I have a strong message to deliver to the Secretary of State – we will not stand idly by while they drive through proposals and make us build more homes than we can realistically accommodate. Concreting over the Green Belt is something this Council will never do and we will also make sure our new Garden Village delivers the roads, schools, shops and health facilities our district desperately needs so we create a better place for existing and future residents.”
For more information please contact Planning Policy on 01883 722000
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